# Bursting the "Bubble" of Environmental Activism: Environmental Philosophies, Ecological Habitus and Diversity in Austrian Environmental Movements

By Criostóir King

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First Reader: Dr Claudio Sopranzetti

Second Reader: Dr Guntra Aistara

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**Abstract**

Environmental movements in Austria, as elsewhere in the Global North, are often accused of being disproportionately comprised of white, middle-class activists. However, the scene of environmental activism in Austria has been changing recently, with the emergence of new, younger movements and growing engagement from trade unions. Based on ethnographic fieldwork within one established Austrian environmental NGO, and interviews with activists from other environmental and trade union organisations, I explore the much-discussed issue of class and racial diversity in environmental activism from a new angle. I analyse how both the environmental philosophies of a movement and the more mundane elements of its culture shape its *ecological habitus,* thus creating a culture of inclusion for some, while excluding others. Looking at Global North environmental movements through a Marxist and decolonial lens, I argue for a rethinking of dominant philosophies which fail to challenge the broader systemic causes of environmental problems. Addressing problems of inclusion and diversity within Austrian environmental movements requires both this philosophical rethinking and the creation of more inclusive cultures within environmental movements. Furthermore, I argue that these two factors are inextricably connected, as certain environmental philosophies form part of the *ecological habitus* of environmental activists, and thus part of the culture of a movement. This suggests the need to go beyond surface-level measures aimed at inclusion and diversity, towards a deep rethinking of the structures and cultures of Austrian environmental movements.

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# Introduction

One evening, as I sat with environmental activists in a bar after our meeting, the conversation turned to the issue of the protests which had been taking place against the construction of a motorway in the protected Lobau area of Vienna. Protestors had been using tactics of direct action, and at the time one activist was even on hunger strike. The question arose of how much activists should be willing to give or sacrifice for their cause. One young activist spoke of her personal feeling of responsibility. She acknowledged her own privileged position in the world, and felt that, if she is in the position to do something or to make a difference, then she is obliged to do so. This was a common feeling among many activists with whom I spoke during my fieldwork, and it is an argument that is often used by environmentalists when accused of using tactics that are off-putting for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of colour) and working-class people. Although environmentalists usually express their desire to use their privilege for the benefit of others, this argument also neglects to consider how their activism can be alienating for the less-privileged, and the implications that such a homogenous movement has in terms of just outcomes.

The ethnography in this thesis takes place mainly within one of Austria's most established environmental NGOs, referred to in this thesis as GreenFuture. I joined activists and employees of the organisation in meetings, activist groups, workshops and other events. I complimented participant observation with semi-structured interviews, which I conducted with members of the GreenFuture as well as some Trade Unionists and activists from other Austrian environmental movements, in order to understand how the NGO's work fits into the broader scene of environmental activism in Austria. The research focuses on motivations for environmental activism, the cultures of environmental movements, and the environmental philosophies of

activists, to gain a holistic understanding of the source of middle-class, white dominance in Austrian environmental movements.

**The Issue of Racial and Class Diversity in Environmental Movements**

The perception of environmental movements as mostly dominated by the white middle classes is prevalent in the collective consciousness of Global North societies today. This is seen in media debates which criticise environmental movements for being disproportionately white and middle-class (e.g. Bawden, 2015; FIPU, 2020; Langrock-Kögel, 2020; Lewis, 2021) and in more cynical attacks which try to frame environmental protection as a luxury for elites who can afford it (e.g. Darwall, 2019; Curzon, 2021; Rollins and Perry, 2021). Such debates are influential in forming, and are a reflection of, perceptions of environmentalism in the collective consciousness (Hansen, 2019). The environmentalism of BIPOC and working-class people is often underestimated by people and underrepresented in the media and political debates (Jones, 2002; Finney, 2014; Pearson *et al.*, 2018; Bell, 2019, 2020).

Such arguments are broadly applicable to the Austrian context. However, the issue of racial or ethnic inequalities is much less prevalent in the Austrian public discourse than in the English-speaking one. Environmental justice in European research and activism is more concerned with socially disadvantaged population groups generally, than with racial inequalities explicitly (Laurent, 2011; Grafe, 2020, p. 41). Nevertheless, in Austria as elsewhere, issues of racial and ethnic inequalities are strongly tied to socio-economic inequalities (Riederer *et al.*, 2019). While race is rarely discussed as a point in and of itself in the Austrian context, it can be understood as part of the general idea that socially disadvantaged groups are less likely to get involved in environmental movements. While gender is a category that many activists mentioned to me, it takes

a different trajectory to class and race, due to the very high female participation in Austrian environmental movements and efforts to be inclusive towards Queer people in recent years. Therefore, gender as a category of inequality is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Most social science research that has been done on the social composition of environmental movements has been quantitative and survey-based, and has demonstrated that there are class differences in participation (Wennerhag and Hylmö, 2022, pp. 359–363). This is also true in the Austrian case. Quantitative studies have claimed to show greater concern for the environment among the upper-middle and upper classes (*ORF*, 2021), and greater participation of the upper middle-classes in the Fridays for Future movement in Vienna (Daniel and Deutschmann, 2020). Such studies focus much less on racial and ethnic differences in environmental activism, especially in Europe. Furthermore, quantitative work does not delve deeper into the reasons behind such unequal participation. While some ethnographic work has been done on environmental organisations (e.g. Berglund, 1998; Gatt, 2020), there is little ethnographic exploration of how the internal cultures of environmental movements can lead to such unequal participation. Gatt (2020, pp. 111–116), in her ethnography of Friends of the Earth International, deals with the issue of class and race, admitting that the people she worked with and interviewed were predominantly white and middle-class. She argues, contrary to some theories, that their privileged background does not make them blind to issues of injustice, and they are receptive to diverse perspectives. However, this account does not address possible reasons for a lack of diversity in the first place. This is the research gap which I aim to fill with this thesis.

**Explanations for the Lack of Diversity in Environmental Movements**

Frequently, media and popular discourses depict environmental protection as inherently costly, and thus at odds with the material needs and desires of humans, making it inaccessible and undesirable for the worst off in society (e.g. Fiske, 2019; Harvey and Rankin, 2020; Stangl, 2020; Murdock, 2021; Franzel, no date). As an extension of this way of thinking, environmentalism and support for environmental protection are understood as something which can only be afforded by those who have already fulfilled their basic material needs.

Much social science research on concern for the environment and participation in environmentalism has tended to reproduce this framing. It has been common in the social sciences to portray members of environmental movements as middle-class and highly educated (Rootes and Brulle, 2013), even though Wennerhag and Hylmö (2022) point out that this seems counterintuitive, given that environmental movements advocate for issues which they consider relevant for humanity at large. Both Rootes and Brulle (2013) and Wennerhag and Hylmö (2022) discuss how Inglehart's (1971) theory of postmaterialism has been particularly influential in this regard. This theory argues that affluence in childhood years in wealthy countries leads to a prioritisation of "postmaterial" values (e.g. freedom of expression or gender equality) over "material" values (e.g. shelter, food, water), leading to the development of "new social movements" such as environmentalism in the 60s and 70s (Inglehart, 1981) and heightened support for environmental protection among those with postmaterial values (Inglehart, 1995). However, this understanding disregards the importance of the environment in satisfying the material needs of humans. It is an essentially classist understanding of human values and motivations, as it assumes that the middle and upper classes can be motivated by ideology, while the poor, working classes and the socially marginalised are only motivated by physical or material needs. Additionally, it does not consider the heterogeneity of environmentalisms. People have different

priorities when it comes to environmental activism which are shaped by their class, race, gender, societal experiences, and other factors (Taylor, 1997), and so it is important to consider that if environmental protection is associated with a certain middle-class, white environmentalism, this can be off-putting for many. Therefore, the environmental philosophy of a movement – i.e. its beliefs about how humans should live, how environmental problems should be addressed, and the ideal relationship between humans and nature (Carmin and Balser, 2002) – play a role in attracting or deterring support.

The lack of diversity in mainstream environmental movements is also frequently explained by cultural factors. Environmentalists have been accused of not considering the issues facing BIPOC and working-class people when developing their tactics. For example, protest movements which use arrest as a core tactic are accused of failing to account for the concerns of those who typically experience disproportionately high rates of police violence (e.g. Gayle, 2019). Environmental activists can also be accused of being arrogant and privileged, telling poorer and more marginalised people how they should live (Bell, 2020, p. 115). The lack of recognition for the environmentalism of BIPOC people (Finney, 2014), the "middle-class capture" of mainstream environmental movements (Bell, 2020, pp. 164–169), and classist discrimination experienced by working-class people who try to partake in environmentalism (Bell, 2020, pp. 169–171) can also lead to a general alienation of marginalised communities from mainstream environmental movements, regardless of their support for environmental protection. Furthermore, Bell and Bevan (2021) found that a lack of information, perceptions of the demographic makeup of a movement, issues with the group's culture, and tactics were important factors which discouraged BIPOC and working-class people from getting involved in environmentalism. What all these explanations have in common is that they point to the lack of a culture of inclusion within environmental organisations, which can lead people from marginalised communities to feel unwelcome.

Therefore, the research problem for this thesis concerns the need to better understand diversity and inclusion in environmental activism in a way that avoids classist and racist assumptions about motivations, takes into account how the humanity-nature relationship is framed in the environmental philosophies of different movements, and examines the cultures of inclusion or exclusion which exist within them.

**Research Questions**

My research investigates the issue of diversity in an environmental organisation by examining both the environmental philosophy which it embodies and its internal class culture, viewing both factors as inherently interlinked. Therefore, the main research question addressed in this thesis is the following: *How do the dominant environmental philosophies and class cultures within Austrian environmental movements shape the diversity of their social composition, and vice versa?* To answer this question, I examine the issues of diversity which are present within the movements, I look at the efforts that activists and NGO-employees make to reach out and spread their message to diverse groups, and I consider how a certain environmental philosophy, among other factors, becomes embedded in the culture of movements, thus leading to the reproduction of their social composition.



**Explanation of Terminology Used**

The terms environmentalism and environmental movement are associated with a diverse range of movements and understandings of what the environment is, what constitutes protecting it, and for what purposes (Davies, 2009). In this thesis, I use the terms "environmentalism(s)" and "environmental movement(s)" to refer to the broad range of movements and organisations which

have a focus on ecological problems and sustainability. I use them mainly in the plural to acknowledge the diversity of these movements, but where I use them in the singular it is as an umbrella term and not intended to homogenise environmental movements. Ferdinand's (2022, p. 5) definition of environmentalism is what I will refer to as "mainstream environmentalism(s)", referring specifically to those Global North environmentalisms with their history in conservation movements or the movements of the 1960s/1970s, and which remain preoccupied with "nature", thus neglecting questions of social injustice. In "mainstream environmentalism(s)" I exclude newer and emerging movements which have an environmental justice approach and may be changing the perception of "environmentalisms", as described by Wennerhag and Hylmö (2022).

By "Global North" I refer to high-income countries and those parts of the world where industrialisation first emerged. Although the terms "Global North" and "Global South" are useful in making this distinction, I acknowledge that they are problematic, that they underplay power dynamics, and that no such pure demarcations exist in reality (Trefzer *et al.*, 2014). However, I use them as the history of environmental movements is very different for the parts of the world often referred to as the Global North and Global South, and the history of Austrian environmental movements generally fits well into the literature on Global North environmentalisms.

## Theoretical Framework

Explanations for the lack of diversity in many mainstream environmental movements typically revolve around either general support for environmental protection (e.g. Inglehart, 1995), or issues with the movements' culture (e.g. Bell and Bevan, 2021). In this thesis, I view these two factors as intrinsically linked. I connect theoretical understandings of the humanity-nature relationship (Moore, 2016; Ferdinand, 2022), and how it is understood in the environmental philosophies of movements (Descola, 1996; Latour *et al.*, 2018), with theories of *(ecological) habitus* and practice (Bourdieu, 1977, 1985; Haluza-DeLay, 2008). I consider how certain environmental philosophies, as well as the more mundane elements of a culture, shape a movement's social composition. This framework, therefore, rejects the separation of cultural and philosophical explanations, and is helpful in thinking holistically about how, as environmental movements create inclusive environments for some, they may simultaneously marginalise others.[1]

### Environmental Philosophies and Understandings of the Humanity-Nature Relationship

It is widely considered that modern environmental movements took off in Europe and North America in the 1960s, following the publication of Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" (Sills, 1975; Hajer, 1990; Lifset, 2014). However, in Austria and elsewhere there were precursors to modern environmentalisms in the early 20th century, which focussed on wildlife conservation and were



[1] This theoretical framework is largely based on the ideas developed in two term papers I submitted at CEU. These were "The Humanity-Nature Relationship: An Application of the Marxist Ecological Approach to My Thesis Research Topic" (2021) for the course "Key Issues in Sociological Theory" and "Understandings of the Humanity-Nature Relationship in the Habitus and Class Culture of Environmental Movements" (2022) for the course "Contemporary Social Theory".

mainly the concern of a privileged few (Slocombe, 1984; Ingruber *et al.*, 2004). Since their beginnings, environmental movements have been heterogenous and embodied different environmental philosophies. These are essentially different ways of understanding humanity's relationship to the rest of nature, and how this relationship should be addressed by movements.

Brulle (2000) categorised nine distinct philosophies. The most relevant for this study are "reform environmentalism", "deep ecology" and "environmental justice". "Reform environmentalism" stresses the links between human health and ecosystem conditions, highlighting the role of the natural sciences in developing solutions to environmental problems. However, its strong emphasis on natural sciences limits its ability to see the social and political consequences of environmental problems, and to envisage a future sustainable society (Brulle, 2000, p. 191). This is the philosophy most associated with the beginnings of environmental movements in the 1960s, and Brulle (2000, p.287) listed Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth as prominent examples of reform environmental organisations. "Deep ecology" refers to the belief in the intrinsic value of all life on Earth. It advocates for a decreased human impact on the Earth and an increase in space for wilderness. Brulle (2000, p. 205) described deep ecology as a limited discourse, with a restricted capacity to address social and political issues, and names Earth First! as an example movement. Finally, "environmental justice" sees ecological problems in the context of the structures of society, and the need of this society to continually exploit nature. It emerged out of a rejection of the dominance of white, upper- and middle-classes in earlier movements, and examples include the People of Colour Environmental Movement in the USA (Brulle, 2000, p. 213). This categorisation of environmental philosophies is applicable to the Austrian case. I use it as a way of thinking about the heterogeneity of environmental movements and the different ways that the humanity-nature relationship can be understood within them.

According to Latour, the philosophies of many mainstream, contemporary environmental movements are underpinned by modernist epistemologies which conceive of nature and humanity as separate (Latour *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, Descola (1996) argued that the protection of non-human life – even in more altruistic contexts, such as conservationist movements – simply transfers ideas of domination over nature to a new plane where they appear more benevolent. By placing nature on a pedestal, they sustain the modernist humanity-nature dualism (Descola, 1996). When thinking about understandings of the humanity-nature relationship, it is important to consider the broader societal processes which allow certain understandings to emerge and dominate in certain contexts. Here, I explore what can be gained from looking at these understandings through a Marxist and decolonial lens.

Marxist ecological thought recognises that humans are materially reliant on the rest of nature, but not separate from it. In Marx's ecological thinking, ideas about being part of nature and relying on it for material needs were not at odds with one another, but rather this reliance emerges from our being part of nature (Marx, 1992). Marx (1993, p. 226) described the "metabolism" that exists between humans and nature, thus illustrating the ways in which humans convert the resources of the natural environment into their means of existence. Bellamy Foster (1999) developed Marx's ideas into the concept of "metabolic rift", which describes capitalism's disruption of the metabolic relationship between humans and the rest of nature, thus alienating their relationship. Capitalism does this through its prioritisation of abstracted exchange-values, which discount nature as a source of wealth, thus concealing the material dependence of humans on nature (Bellamy Foster, 1997). Furthermore, Marxist ecology helps to conceptualise ecological crises in the context of the broader social and economic organisation of human life. If capitalism, through its commodification of nature and focus on exchange-values, alienates humans from their metabolic relationship to nature and inherently necessitates its exploitation, then ecological crises can be seen as an unavoidable

consequence of capitalism. Marx identified this over 150 years ago in the context of soil degradation (Marx, 1993) and this thinking can be applied to many ecological problems today. Marxist ecology, therefore, sees the humanity-nature dualism not as a natural way of being, but rather as a product of the forces of capitalism.

Discussions of the Anthropocene have raised questions about how humans fit into what Moore (2015) calls the “”web of life”. Moore (2016) argues that the humanity-nature dualism is a capitalist dualism. He argues that this “either/or organization of reality” is an important part of capitalist development, and that overcoming it will be crucial to overcoming the inequalities and unsustainability of capitalism (p. 3). Moore critiques the discourse of the Anthropocene as, although it has brought nature in to social theory, it is too anthropocentric, reduces the possibility to challenge the domination of the planet by humans (p. 25), and homogenises the “human”, as if there is only one way of inhabiting the Earth (p. 24). He instead argues for the term “Capitalocene”, which places capitalism at the centre of the debate and pays attention to its ways of organising nature.

Moore considers the nature-society dualism as similarly responsible for the violence, inequality and oppression of modernity as other binaries such as Eurocentrism, racism and sexism (p. 2). This is echoed by Ferdinand’s (2022, p. 11) concept of “destructive ways of inhabiting the Earth”. Ferdinand argues that the Anthropocene discourse erases the colonial history of the violence carried out against colonised people and natures, which he sees as going hand in hand (p. 8). An important concept in Ferdinand’s decolonial ecology is the “double fracture”: a modernist understanding that “separates the colonial history of the world from its environmental history” (p. 3). This fracture stems from what he calls the “great divide” of modernity, which separated nature/environment from culture/society in a dualism that placed humans in a superior position to

nature (p. 4). Therefore, he sees the nature/culture dichotomy and the environmental philosophies in which it is embedded today as essentially colonial ways of looking at the world.

Accepting that the nature-humanity dualism is not a universal or natural way of thinking, we can consider how such thinking is embedded in environmental movements. Latour distinguishes between the theory and practice of environmental movements. For example, they claim to protect nature from humans while bringing humans more and more into the picture, and they claim to protect nature for nature's sake while usually using the well-being or pleasure of certain humans (usually white, rich and educated) to justify this protection (Latour, 2004, p. 20). He argues that environmentalists embraced the concept of nature and its exteriority to politics and that this has ensured that environmental movements remain separate from many other social movements (Latour *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, the nature-society dualism has become a seemingly natural or taken-for-granted way of thinking for many due to the influential forces of capitalism and colonialism, and it has often been embraced by those who wish to address the environmental problems created by such a dualism in the first place. Ferdinand (2022, pp. 1–22) also argues that this dualism is to blame for the separation of environmentalism from many other social movements, and thus the lack of BIPOC presence within mainstream environmental movements. Therefore, in addressing the question of class and racial diversity in environmental movements, I reject the theory that support for environmental protection is a postmaterial value, acquired by the more privileged who have already met their basic material needs (Inglehart, 1995). Instead, this theoretical framework illustrates the connections between class/race and the *type* of environmentalism (environmental philosophy) that a person supports.

**Environmental Philosophies in the Culture and Habitus of Environmental Movements**

Currid-Halkett (2017) discusses how a type of consumption-oriented environmentalism has become an internalised part of mainstream thinking among the middle classes in wealthy, Global North societies. According to Bourdieu (1985, p. 18) wealth is "converted into an integral part of the person" in the form of cultural capital. This can be acquired consciously or unconsciously through socialisation, and it is the subtle marker of a person's place in the stratification of society. Habitus describes "systems of durable, transposable dispositions" which structure people's practices and are "collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 72). Habitus, therefore, comprises a person's behaviour, their skills, and their ways of understanding the world, which the person has unconsciously embodied. The habitus is what is formed through the conversion of external wealth into embodied cultural capital (Bourdieu 1985, p. 18).

Some theoretical work has applied Bourdieu's concept of habitus to environmental behaviour and activism. The *ecological habitus* is the "embodiment of a durable yet changeable system of ecologically relevant dispositions, practices, perceptions, and material conditions – perceptible as a lifestyle – that is shaped by and helps shape socioecological contexts" (Kasper, 2009, p. 318). It is the set of norms and habits which people internalise and which influences how they think and act towards the environment, influencing also whether they are conscious of their dependency on that environment (Kasper, 2009). The ecological habitus is formed in the social field, and environmental movements can be considered valid fields in their own right (Kirby, 2018). Philosophical stances become embodied in the ecological habitus of environmental movements. Environmental philosophies of movements provide the basis for their action (Carmin and Balser, 2002). Furthermore, the practical action of movements is produced through the ecological habitus (Haluza-DeLay, 2008), which itself incorporates these environmental philosophies. Therefore, as

movements attempt to address environmental issues, they reveal elements of their culture and express shared beliefs about the humanity-nature relationship.

As external wealth becomes transformed into a part of the habitus in the form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977), movements composed of those less affected by social and environmental inequalities embody as part of their ecological habitus an environmental philosophy which, although it may claim to prioritise nature, reproduces the humanity-nature dualism. As Ingold (1992) describes, people's perceptions of the environment are shaped through their direct engagement with it, and so mainstream environmental movements may advocate for an environmentalism which does not adequately take into account the environmental needs and conditions of BIPOC and working-class people. They do this not out of lack of concern, but because their ecological habitus contains a different environmental philosophy.

Johnson (1987), in his account of theories of working-class culture, argues that attention should be paid to the less obviously political features of a culture in order to better understand their more obscure role in politics. He argues for a "complex account of lived cultures", to understand how cultures can be formed, and transformed (p. 211). Like Bourdieu, Johnson wants to grasp the relationship between social classes and the cultures that they form. I am, therefore, interested not only in how certain philosophical stances become embedded in the culture of a movement, but also in the more seemingly mundane factors – where meetings take place, the topics of casual conversations etc. – which shape a culture and contribute to the reproduction of the movement's social structure. Willis (1977) demonstrated how the various elements of a class culture can contribute to the maintenance and reproduction of the social order. Both Johnson and Willis argue against deterministic accounts of social reproduction, considering instead the role of culture as a mediator. The integration of environmental philosophies and the more mundane elements of a movement's culture shapes its practice. I have outlined how the culture, philosophies and practice

of a movement are shaped by those who participate in it, but these factors in turn also shape the social composition of the movement, by making some feel at home while potentially alienating others. In this thesis, I consider the role of culture, both its more political and mundane elements, in forming and reproducing the social composition of environmental movements.

**Conclusion**

The theoretical framework I apply in this thesis considers humans to be part of and dependent on nature. However, the colonial and capitalist history of the world has promoted understandings which see humans as apart from nature. As the habitus is produced through history (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 78), many mainstream environmental movements have embodied in their ecological habitus environmental philosophies which accord with this view. Explanations of the lack of diversity in mainstream environmental movements have often focused on either the environmental philosophies or cultures of environmental movements which do not appeal to BIPOC and working-class people. However, in this thesis I approach these two factors as one integrated whole, regarding environmental philosophies as embodied in the culture and ecological habitus of movements. This means that class does not dictate whether or not environmental concern emerges, as the postmaterialism theory (Inglehart, 1995) would argue, but rather it shapes the environmental philosophy which people embody in their ecological habitus: i.e. the type of environmentalism they support. Such an understanding offers the possibility of analysing diversity issues within movements in a holistic way, helping to conceptualise how movements can be made more inclusive through both a revision of their cultures and philosophies.

## Environmentalism in Austria: A Story of Class Conflict

In the previous chapter I discussed how issues of diversity and inclusion in environmental movements are shaped by both the environmental philosophies and broader cultures of the movements. Here, I explore the historical development of environmental movements in Austria, the environmental philosophies that they have embodied, and the class conflicts which have characterised them. Modern environmental movements did not simply emerge out of nothing in the 60s and 70s, as is popularly believed. Rather, environmentalist thought in Austria has roots in the conservationist movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and middle-class dominance of many movements was an early phenomenon in Austria's environmental history. Environmental activism is constantly evolving, as new actors enter the scene and new conflicts emerge. Questions of class (and therefore also racial) inequalities in environmental movements are still present, although there are some signs that this is starting to be addressed.

### The Long Roots of Environmentalist Thought in Austria

Early 20th century environmental movements in Austria were mainly focussed on the preservation of the "homeland" and "wilderness" (Ingruber *et al.*, 2004, p. 34). In the German-speaking context, precursors to modern environmental movements often included conservative and nationalist groups, such as the "Lebensreformer" (life-reformers), "Wandervogel" (wandering birds) and the "Heimatschutzbewegung" (movement for the protection of the homeland) (Christmann, 1996). These groups often had right-wing tendencies and connected natural landscapes with ideas of national identity. In fact, during Nazi Germany (of which Austria was a part between 1938 and 1945), conservationist and environmentalist sentiments were quite strong,

and there was a large overlap between the ideologies of nature conservation and National Socialism. National Socialist thought rejected the nature-humanity dualism and advocated for the re-integration of humans into the rest of nature (Staudenmaier, 2011). The German and Austrian conservationist movements of the time cooperated with the National Socialists, adopted much of their racist and nationalist thinking, and struggled to come to terms with this past for many decades after (Uekötter, 2006).

In Austria, the first organisation directed towards the protection of nature was the "Naturschutzpark" (nature protection park), founded in 1912 with the goal of protecting the landscape of the Alps (Ingruber *et al.*, 2004, p. 34). Early movements were often influenced by Romantic and Rousseauian ideas of nature and critiques of civilisation (Christmann, 1996). However, one exception within the Austrian context was the "Naturfreunde" (friends of nature), which was a left-wing organisation originating from the workers' movement, the goal of which was to make nature accessible to the working classes. This group was established by the Social Democratic government in Vienna in 1895 and so has its roots in this history of "Red Vienna" (Vienna's socialist-led period), and it soon started to get involved in activities with the purpose of protecting nature (Christmann, 1996; Ingruber *et al.*, 2004, p. 34). However, most predecessors to modern Austrian environmental movements in the early 20$^{th}$ century evolved out of the emergence of an educated middle-class which questioned ideas of modernisation and progress, sometimes cooperated with or embraced National Socialism, and rejected the social-democratic-led nature conservation of the time (Schmid and Veichtlbauer, 2007, p. 16).

**The Emergence of Modern Environmentalisms in Austria**

Austria is considered somewhat of a latecomer when it comes to the emergence of modern environmental movements (Pesendorfer, 2007, p. 23). Environmental movements started gaining broader public support in the 1970s following the first oil shock which led to attempts by the Austrian government to become more self-sufficient in energy and, consequentially, to many prominent and influential environmental conflicts (Ingruber *et al.*, 2004, pp. 35–36). The emergence of Austrian environmental movements in the 70s has also been attributed to the country's transition from an industrial to service-based economy during that time (Daniel *et al.*, 2021, p. 20). Furthermore, like elsewhere in Europe and North America, the ideas of Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" were influential in the development of modern Austrian environmentalist thought (Pesendorfer, 2007, p. 54). Christmann (1996) argues that these ideas were important in shifting the focus from the preservation of the "beauty" of nature to a consciousness that the survival of humans depends on the environment. In Austria, nature conservation became less about aesthetics and more about ecology (Schmid and Veichtlbauer, 2007, p. 16).

According to Christmann (1996), early conservationist and preservationist movements in German-speaking Europe were subsumed under and transformed into modern environmental movements in the 60s and 70s. For Christmann (1996), there are both continuities and transformations in this history. She argues that during the emergence of modern movements, aesthetic arguments about environmental protection stepped into the background, while a growing consciousness emerged that environmental protection was about the survival of humans. However, there were also some continuities from the earlier conservationist and preservationist movements, with Rousseauian and Romantic ideas making a comeback in the early movements (Christmann, 1996). On the other hand, Schmid and Veichtlbauer (2007, p. 16) argue that the old nature conservation movement in Austria did not get assimilated into the newly emerging environmental

movements, but they did engage with the new debates and re-positioned themselves accordingly. Either way, modern environmental movements in Austria have been shaped both by continuities in thinking which emphasised the intrinsic value of nature, and by transformations which led to an awareness of human dependency on nature and the environment.

Modern environmentalism and environmental politics in Austria have been profoundly shaped by two infrastructural conflicts in particular. The first was a protest movement against the construction of a nuclear power plant in Zwentendorf in the 1970s. This resulted in a national referendum, in which nuclear energy was banned nationwide (Soder *et al.*, 2018, p. 523). The second involved the proposed construction of a hydroelectric dam in Hainburg in the 1980s. Environmental activists occupied the construction site and the project was eventually abandoned, leading to the creation of the Donau-Auen National Park (Pesendorfer, 2007, pp. 120–125). Zwentendorf and Hainburg are considered turning points in environmental awareness in Austria and crucial moments in the development of the Austrian environmental movement (Schmid and Veichtlbauer, 2007). Activists framed these conflicts in terms of a new type of politics fighting an old material one (Nenning, 1984). They also had important implications for the understanding of democracy in Austria, as they introduced civil disobedience as a valid tactic and an officially recognised way of exercising direct democracy (Natter, 1987).

The environmental conflicts of Zwentendorf and Hainburg are also considered to be of historical importance in the antagonism between environmentalists and Trade Unions in Austria (Soder *et al.*, 2018 p.523). This antagonistic relationship has been attributed to the "jobs vs. environment dilemma" (p. 524), where the material wellbeing of workers is pitted against the protection of the environment. The populist rhetoric of the movements against these infrastructural projects was class-unspecific and often emphasised the heterogeneity of the coalitions which emerged around them. However, workers were almost never represented, while there was a

disproportionate representation of highly-educated participants (Natter, 1987). Furthermore, the emerging environmental awareness of this era was present especially among the socially and economically privileged middle-classes (Pesendorfer, 2007, pp. 57–58), but there were some attempts to bridge this divide. For example, activists opposing the Hainburg construction claimed to be developing solutions to create jobs and starting a dialogue with workers and trade unions (Nenning, 1984). Furthermore, Soder *et al.* (2018) point out that the relationship between trade unions and the environmental movement in Austria is changing and becoming less hostile. This is due to the rising prominence of environmental issues and stronger alliances being built between the movements. Nevertheless, conflicts between them remain (p. 526).

**Transformations and Consistencies in the 21st Century**

Following successes in the late 20th century, European and North American environmental movements began to become increasingly institutionalised. This happens when environmental organisations engage in dialogue with corporate leaders and gain access to the political system (Gottlieb, 2005, pp. 174–175). Della Porta and Portos (2021, p. 4) discuss the "NGO-ization of environmental conflicts", referring to the bureaucratisation of environmental organisations and the associated moderation of their goals and strategies. Gottlieb (2005, p. 202) describes the growth of "expertise-oriented, staff-based professional groups" and he argues that, as organisations became emblematic of the mainstream environmental movement, they redefined environmentalism as an addition to the political system, as opposed to a social movement (p. 175).

By the 1990s, this institutionalisation had taken place throughout Western Europe, thanks to the incorporation of environmental issues in the political agendas of national governments and the European Union, the growth of Green Parties, and the presence of well-established,

internationalised environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth (Rootes, 2003). Such large NGOs finance themselves through donations from the wealthy and middle classes, meaning they rarely consider the environmentalism of the poor, and they choose the strategies most likely to succeed, often pursuing goals of the "green economy" (della Porta and Portos, 2021, p. 4). The institutionalisation and NGO-isation of environmental movements has been associated with demobilisation (Rootes, 2003), and movements have faced criticism and challenges from those who define environmentalism as a broader social movement (Gottlieb, 2005, p. 217). However, Rootes (2003) argues that, in Western Europe, there was a re-emergence of radical environmental protest in the 1990s. Therefore, although the institutionalisation of environmental movements has been a prominent element in the history of Western environmentalisms, it does not rule out the possibility for the continuation, re-emergence and co-existence of more radical, grassroots protest movements.

In Austria, the contemporary environmental movement arose out of decentralised, direct-action protests in Zwentendorf and Hainburg. The 1990s saw the increased presence and significance of NGOs which were connected internationally, pursued obtainable and clearly defined goals, and aimed to influence parliamentary processes and legislation (Daniel, *et al.*, 2021, p. 20). Strategies such as petitions, publicity work, lobbying and legal cases increasingly became more prominent elements of the "repertoire of collective action" (see Tilly, 1978) of environmental movements.

More recently, established actors in the environmental and climate activism scene in Austria have been joined by new groups such as System Change, not Climate Change!, Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion (Daniel *et al.*, 2021, p. 19). The return to the tactic of street protest and the emergence of the concept of climate justice have been defining features of the Austrian environmental movement in the last 10-15 years (p. 20-25). Institutionalised forms of

environmentalism did not completely replace protest movements. For example, direct action and occupations were used as tactics in protests against the construction of a motorway and tunnel underneath the Lobau nature reserve in Vienna in 2006 (Wendering, 2016, p. 56). Furthermore, more recent developments have seen an increase in street protests and grassroots movements since the 2010s (Daniel, *et al.*, 2021, pp. 24–25) and decentralised direct-action movements have become more relevant since the escalation of the Lobau-motorway conflict in 2021 (Hagen, 2021), existing alongside and often working together with established NGOs.

The Lobau conflict demonstrates that the typical debate which pitches economic development against social and environmental impacts is still present in Austria (Wendering, 2016, pp. 55–56). Zwentendorf and Hainburg retain a strong presence in the memories of Austrian environmental organisations today, and a link is often made to the current Lobau conflict, where similar discourses and tactics are used (e.g. NOBAU, no date). However, despite recent momentum building, the movement faces challenges in mobilising more people and rethinking strategies to include new groups. Some steps have already been taken in this regard, with System Change, not Climate Change! connecting with anti-racist groups and Fridays for Future getting involved in certain feminist movements (Daniel *et al.*, 2021, pp. 28–29). Therefore, alliance-building and a rethinking of strategies is starting to take place to address the decades-old issue of representation and diversity in Austrian environmental movements.



**Conclusion: Class, Race and Environmental Protection**

The history of environmentalism in Austria has been shaped by tensions between progressive and conservative forces. Despite the presence of a workers' environmentalism in the late 19th and early 20th century, the early development of Austrian environmentalism was marked

by more middle-class, conservative, and even sometimes National Socialist or Nazi-sympathetic movements. Increased environmental conflicts since the 70s led to the emergence of modern environmental movements. These were different from their predecessors, but they did not emerge from nothing and there were some continuities between the early 20th century environmental movements and those of the late 20th century (Christmann, 1996).

The conflicts which acted as a catalyst for many modern environmental movements were characterised by conflicts between environmentalists and workers movements. The "jobs vs. environment dilemma" became an important element of the public discourse around these conflicts at the time (Soder *et al.*, 2018), and the popular idea that environmental protection must come at an economic cost for the less well-off in society has persisted since. Furthermore, from the 1990s on, environmental movements became increasingly institutionalised, as they became dominated by NGOs which receive donations from the wealthy and middle-classes, and have built progressively closer relationships to the political system and private sector (Daniel *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, the question of class in Austrian environmental movements cannot be addressed by only looking at the present moment, but rather it is important to consider the trajectory of these movements over the past 150 years.

In recent years there have been many changes in Austrian environmentalism. Many new movements have entered the picture, often using direct action and street protests as their tactics, and using more decentralised forms of organising (Daniel *et al.*, 2021). These movements have brought the concept of climate justice much more to the fore than previous movements had, and so are considering global issues of justice and inequality. Furthermore, traditional barriers are starting to be broken down somewhat, as the Trade Union movement engages more with environmentalism, and newer environmental movements make efforts to diversify. While environmental justice in the USA, where the concept originated, is focused mainly on racial inequalities, in Europe it is more

concerned with socially disadvantaged population groups (Grafe, 2020, p. 41). However, in Austria, research shows that immigration is a key dimension for social stratification, with people from migrant communities often experiencing the worst effects of rising inequality (e.g. Riederer, *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, in considering environmental justice in Austria I take an intersectional stance, considering how the historical class divide in environmental movements has become embedded in society and how it looks today given the growing intersection of class and race/migration.

## Methodology

Although there has been much quantitative research on diversity and representation in environmental movements (for an overview see Wennerhag and Hylmö, 2022), as well as qualitative research on the perceptions of those who are underrepresented by these movements (e.g. Bell, 2020; Bell and Bevan, 2021), there is a lack of qualitative work looking directly at issues of diversity and representation from within environmentalism. Therefore, my research focusses on understanding how those who are involved in environmentalism in Austria understand issues of diversity and representation, their environmental philosophies, and how the culture of an organisation can lead to inclusion of some groups and the (unintentional) exclusion of others.

### The Field

Based in Vienna, I gained access to one prominent environmental NGO which has had an important place in the history of the Austrian environmental movement and which represents the reform environmentalism tradition. The NGO has requested to remain anonymous for the purposes of this study and will be referred to as GreenFuture. GreenFuture uses tactics such as petitions, lobbying, awareness raising, and environmental education, focussing on issues such as nuclear energy, genetically modified foods, energy transitions, climate change and pesticides. I also gained access to a trade union organisation which emphasises an environmental justice perspective, looking at both social and environmental issues through the one lens. This organisation will also be kept anonymous in this study and will be referred to as GreenJustice. GreenJustice forms part of the Austrian "Sozialpartnerschaft" (social partnership) system, and so, along with business

interest groups, is involved in negotiating wage agreements and in proposing and debating legislation on a broad range of social, political and economic issues (Tálos, 2019).

GreenFuture allowed me to take part in the activities of two of their activist groups, and I attended their meetings twice weekly from the start of March until mid-May 2022. These meetings involved presentations from the NGO's staff on certain topics, group activities, brainstorming actions, team-building exercises and group projects which focussed on specific issues. In both activist groups I joined the project group focussed on the Lobau issue, as I wanted to engage with one of the most prominent contemporary environmental conflicts in Austria. One time I also observed a project which delivers workshops on environmental matters in schools with a high proportion of children from migrant backgrounds. However, possibilities for participant observation with GreenJustice were limited and confined to around 4 online meetings, sometimes including meetings of other organisations under the umbrella of UG (Unabhängige GewerkschatrerInnen – Independent Trade Unionists). Therefore, the core of the research for this study is the ethnographic work done with GreenFuture, complimented by some limited participant observation in GreenJustice and related trade union groups, semi-structured interviews with members of these organisations and with activists from Fridays for Future Austria, Workers for Future Austria, and the Lobau protest camp.



**Ethnographic Methods**

Ethnographic methods were used to gain an in-depth understanding of how the humanity-nature relationship is framed, and how issues of diversity and representation are understood in the culture of the movements studied. Ethnography is a way of understanding social life in the context of wider structures, history, and how social actors understand it themselves (O'Reilly, 2012b).

With this, I develop a narrative account of those elements of Austrian environmentalism to which I gained access, shedding light on their internal cultures, and how these exist in the minds of individual activists as well as in their shared consciousness. This is a qualitative and interpretivist approach, aiming to understand how actors in environmental movements understand themselves and the meaning they attribute to their actions. It is an attempt to gain insights at the micro-level which can be useful in addressing broader questions of inequality facing Global North environmental movements at the macro-level. Ethnographic methods are often used to study social movements due to their suitability for examining their dynamics and strategies (Ritter, 2014, p. 103).

The ethnographic methods that I employed in my fieldwork were participant observation and interviews. Participant observation is the main method of ethnography and it involves participating in the activities of the group, making observations, learning the language they use in their work, and taking notes (O'Reilly, 2012c, p. 84). One of the most important advantages of participant observation is its ability to break down illusions of homogeneity in social movements (Balsiger and Lembelet, 2014, p. 148). This is relevant for my research as I explore the heterogenous forms that environmentalisms can take.

Interviews are used in my research to supplement the insights gained from participant observation. Ethnographic interviews can take the form of opportunistic, spur-of-the-moment chats which take place during participant observation, as well as semi-structured one-on-one interviews (O'Reilly, 2012a p. 112). I used both in my research. Interviewing takes place constantly and not just in structured surroundings, thus contributing to the ethnography's rich account of the organisations being studied (p. 137). In-depth semi-structured interviews have particular importance in the study of social movements due to a lack of reliable databases and

documents, and they allow the researcher to gain insights on internal dynamics of the movement as well as motives, beliefs and attitudes of grassroots activists (della Porta, 2014, pp. 228–229). I conducted a total of 16 semi-structured interviews. Interview participants included members of GreenFuture's activist groups, employees of GreenFuture who work in the area of environmental education and focus on reaching out to ethnic minority and migrant groups, the federal spokesperson and members of GreenJustice, as well as trade unionists from the same umbrella group as GreenJustice who are engaged in environmental issues in some way. I also interviewed some activists from Fridays for Future, Workers for Future, and the Lobau protest movement in order to get some insights into the broader scene of environmental activism in Austria. Participants were found through an open request for volunteers, and they ranged in age and gender, although all bar one were white Austrians or Germans, and all bar one were either university students or university-educated. In this thesis I use pseudonyms to protect the interviewees' identities. Where more identifiable characteristics are mentioned, it is with the permission of the interviewee. The interviews covered the participants' backgrounds, their motivations for engagement in their respective organisations, their perceptions of and experiences with issues of diversity in their activism, and their environmental philosophies. The aim of these interviews was to compliment the observations of participant observation by obtaining deeper insights into the views and perceptions of individual activists, employees and trade unionists.



**Positionality**

As a researcher from a white and middle-class background, I am extremely aware of my positionality in this research. I do not claim to be able to provide the perspective of someone from a BIPOC or working-class background, but rather my aim is to add to the previous literature on

the perspectives of groups who have traditionally been excluded from mainstream environmentalism (e.g. Bell and Bevan, 2021) by examining the cultures *within* an environmental organisation. My aim is to understand whether the perspectives which BIPOC and working-class people often identify as missing from mainstream environmentalism are considered by activists, how certain framings of environmental protection come to be dominant, how cultures of exclusion emerge, and whether or not they are challenged from within. The overarching goal of the research is to contribute to an understanding of how participation in environmentalism can be made more diverse and inclusive, as this undoubtedly leads to better and fairer outcomes.

## Humanity's Place in Nature: Environmental Philosophies and Diversity

At the first of GreenFuture's activist group meetings that I attended, we joined an online webinar together about the genetic engineering of foods. The event was organised by the NGO and its partner organisation in Germany, and it included contributions from many other groups, such as Fridays for Future Austria and some organisations representing farmers. Throughout my fieldwork, events such as these were useful in gaining insights into the dominant environmental philosophy within GreenFuture. One speaker at this webinar remarked that the issue of genetic engineering brought into focus the "question of naturalness". For him, attempts to alter the DNA of plant species reflects the human desire to dominate and control nature, and this desire has gone a few steps too far. Environmental movements and activists have certain understandings of the relationship between humans and nature (environmental philosophies) which inform their understandings of the causes of environmental problems and frame the solutions they propose. The environmental philosophy of a movement is both a result and cause of that movement's social composition. In this chapter, I explore how GreenFuture's activists frame the humanity-nature relationship, and how these philosophies inform their strategies for outreach and diversification. Activists understand support for environmental protection not as being based on the relevance of nature to people's lives, but rather on whether that relevance is visible. Despite an acceptance that humans are part of and dependent on nature, I show how GreenFuture is mainly characterised by an environmentalism which itself obscures the humanity-nature relationship, with important consequences for diversity.

**The Obscuring of Humanity's Relationship to the Rest of Nature**

In the environmental philosophy of activists I spoke to in GreenFuture and other movements, humans are part of nature. Many pointed to the altering of the humanity-nature relationship caused by industrialisation and urbanisation since the 19th century. Felix, a trade union employee, spoke about the changes in the humanity-nature relationship that came about when humans started burning fossil fuels. According to him, the subsequent extreme boost in prosperity was the result of humans' inbuilt predisposition to strive for progress and development, which in turn makes them blind to their place in nature.

> I see no contradiction between humans and nature […] we are a part of nature. And we are a species that tends to have massive and radical impacts on nature… and that was always the case […] I think that humanity has done that for as long as it has existed. (Felix, 28/04/22)

For Felix, humans are a part of nature, but their tendency to deny this fact and to try to control and dominate nature is an intrinsic characteristic. Many people with whom I spoke stressed the role of urbanisation in obscuring humanity's dependent relationship with nature. Many of them theorised the metabolic rift (Bellamy Foster, 1999) in their own way, pointing out that, as people move to the city and are involved in capitalist production, the metabolic processes of nature become disrupted and obscured, so that people do not see their direct reliance on nature. For example, Selina, a young student and activist with GreenFuture remarked:

> I think that nowadays we have an extremely abstract relationship [to nature] because more and more people are moving into cities, nature is being increasingly repressed, and more and more area gets paved […] Through increasing numbers of people - and the fact that everything is becoming a lot more urban - this respect for nature is simply disappearing, I believe. (Selina, 27/04/22)

Furthermore, Lukas, a young climate activist with Fridays for Future Austria commented:

> I think […] that humanity has removed itself [from nature] because a lot has become abstract… For example, on the topic of nutrition: I think that through the industrialisation of nutrition it is the case that humans have removed themselves from very many simple processes, like, for example, how things grow, how much work there is behind one piece of meat. And when you remove yourself from that and it all becomes totally abstract, then it is less tangible and you cannot understand the value of it all anymore, how much work and how much value is behind it. (Lukas, 05/05/22)

Many activists, NGO-employees and trade unionist with whom I spoke were aware of the role of capitalist modernisation in altering the humanity-nature relationship, although they did not always refer explicitly to capitalism. Furthermore, many criticised what Ferdinand (2022, p. 4) refers to as the "great divide" of modernity, which places humans and nature in a dualistic and hierarchical relationship, with humans in the dominant position. For example, Lukas criticised the old mentality which saw humans as "conquerors" of nature and many others criticised the exploitation of the Global South's resources by the Global North, although again without explicitly mentioning colonialism. However, although many environmentalists voiced the need to rediscover and repair humanity's relationship to the rest of nature, many expressed their dissatisfaction with arguments about a return to nature. For example, Aysel, the person employed by GreenFuture to lead workshops in schools with higher numbers of migrant children, told me:

> I am completely against idealising nature and saying that we all need to live naturally again and so on. You know? 'Don't use your smartphone. Let's be like in the Middle Ages, people were so in the moment, you know?' […] I am not in favour of romanticising it [nature] or anything like that. (Aysel, 28/04/22)

Many environmentalists' view of humanity as part of nature does not lead them to the conclusion that humans should revert to nature to solve their problems. Instead, they envisage a new relationship with nature, one which is less extractive and achieves sustainability through new technologies or economic and social systems. For example, Lukas told me that the old mentality of human domination over nature is, for very pragmatic reasons, slowly being replaced by an

awareness among those engaged with environmental protection that humans are part of nature and cannot live without it. They think that environmental crises are revealing the true character of the humanity-nature relationship again, and that broad public support for environmental protection is dependent on people seeing their place within what Moore (2015) would call the "web of life".

**The Link between Environmental Philosophies and Diversity**

There is a general understanding within GreenFuture that the less well-off in society participate less in environmentalism due to their need to prioritise more immediate and obviously material things. During participant observation and interviews with GreenFuture's members, I encountered many ideas which were consistent with the postmaterialism theory, i.e. that the less well-off in society are not as focused on environmentalism (a "postmaterial" issue) because they are too preoccupied with more immediate "material" issues such as income, food, housing etc. (Inglehart, 1995). However, as discussed already, most people I spoke with did not see the environment as postmaterial, but instead saw the obscurity of the material reliance of humanity on nature as the problem. According to this logic, the most marginalised in society are more likely to be concerned with the many issues which have a more visible impact on their lives. Jonas, a young student and activist with GreenFuture, told me:

> If you kind of scrape the minimum subsistence level and have to work a lot, I think there is somehow less capacity to be politically active, unfortunately for many people […] I would describe myself as very privileged overall. (Jonas, 03/05/22)

Furthermore, Jasmin, an employee of GreenFuture in charge of coordinating many of their outreach projects to migrant communities remarked:

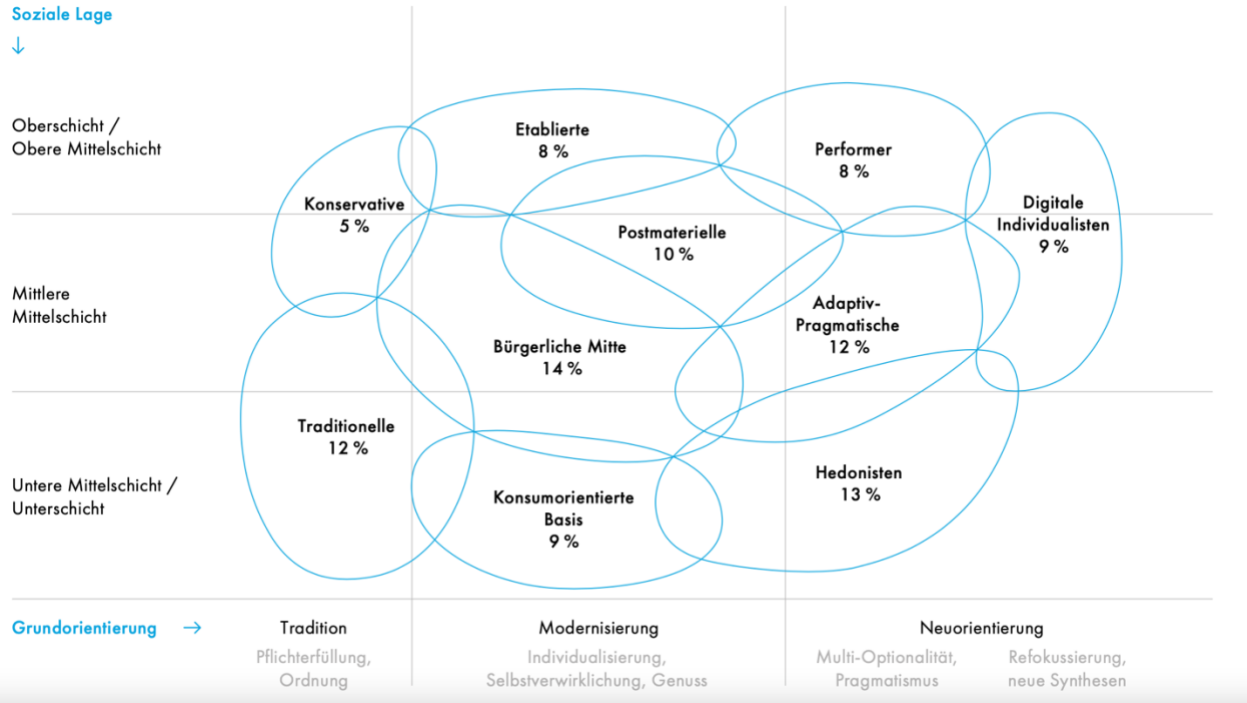
> When it comes to young people, young people with a migration background, then they often have completely different priorities. Things that have to do with racism, experiences

> of racism that they have in Austria, and I think that most of them have a more difficult background than Austrian young people and then other issues are simply more important to them than environmental protection. (Jasmin, 03/05/22)

Such perceptions of who is interested in environmental protection also influence how GreenFuture operates and who they target. I took part in a workshop about the NGO's publicity and outreach strategies. The key message was that the target group of any campaign is *never* everyone. There is always a particular group that GreenFuture deems most likely to support a campaign and thus targets its limited resources towards. To identify their target group, they use the concept of "Sinus-Milieus". This is a target-group typology developed by the SINUS-Institut for Market and Social Research which claims to divide society into groups of like-minded people and is influential in German-speaking countries. It was developed in Germany over 40 years ago and has been adapted to specific national contexts, including Austria[2]. It places people on a scale, with the Y-axis showing a group's social position (based on factors such as education and income), and the X-axis showing their value orientation from traditional to modern. GreenFuture explicitly targets the "Etablierte" (elites), the "Bürgerliche Mitte" (the mainstream middle-class) and the "Postmatierelle" (the postmaterials). Therefore, they intentionally focus their attention on those "milieus" in the middle and upper classes. However, the workshop leaders were keen to stress that other groups are not unimportant to them, but rather that some were simply deemed to be the most likely to support the organisation's work and to have the means to do so, and so they are the best use of GreenFuture's limited publicity resources.



[2] See https://www.sinus-institut.de/sinus-milieus




(The Austrian Sinus-Milieu Model. Source: SINUS-Institut[3])

Although many environmentalists believe that humans are materially reliant on the rest of nature, they acknowledge that this dependency is not clear for everyone and this is at the root of the problem of diversity. This is reminiscent of Berglund's (1998, p. 58) discussion of in and out groups in environmentalism. The in group of environmentalists consider that they, unlike the "misguided majority", are aware of humanity's dependence on nature. This was also echoed by those I spoke to from trade unions, Fridays for Future, Workers for Future and the Lobau Bleibt movement. Many expressed this in a sympathetic way, acknowledging time constraints and the general social disadvantage of those from BIPOC or working-class communities. However, most did not consider the particular framing that has taken hold in Global North societies which depicts

[3] https://www.sinus-institut.de/sinus-milieus/sinus-milieus-oesterreich

environmental protection as at odds with material needs. Aysel was the only one to consider this, stating the following:

> Because climate change and making the right decisions which would be better for the climate are often associated with a certain socioeconomic position, it is often the case that, for example, the topic of how much something costs plays a role. Because, if I for example say to them "well don't fly on holidays so much, that is better for the climate" then they often say "well I have never flown in my life" […] That is to say, the people who damage the climate more, who fly to Naples on holiday for the weekend because they can afford it, those are not the people for whom I do the workshops. (Aysel, 28/04/22)

Aysel, who migrated from Azerbaijan as a child and who works predominantly with children from migrant communities, told me that the kind of mainstream environmentalism which is often promoted is essentially an environmentalism for the rich. It asks of the more privileged to emit marginally less and so it is something which does not speak to people from migrant and poorer communities, regardless of their concern about environmental problems. Furthermore, advocating for an environmentalism which frames environmental protection in terms of sacrifice suggests that nature is separate to human material needs, thus reproducing the idea of a duality between nature and humans. The idea that environmentalism is something which can only be afforded by those who already have met their material needs only makes sense within such a framing. If people come to associate environmentalism with sacrifice, then it makes sense that they would not see the immediate relevance of environment and nature to their immediate needs, and so be less likely to support environmental movements that promote such a framing. Latour (2004, p. 19) argues that, although environmentalists claim to defend nature, they have retained a conception of it which makes their struggle hopeless. Therefore, although many of GreenFuture's employees and activists claim to see humans as part of nature, the organisation's use of a framing which places nature and human material needs at odds with one another perpetuates the humanity-nature dualism, thus preventing broad public support for their cause. The NGO targets its campaigning towards the

more privileged classes, as they believe that these are the most likely to support environmentalism. However, I argue that they are actually targeting those who are most likely to support *GreenFuture's* version of environmentalism, one that has been shaped by people from these same class positions.

**Individual Behaviour Change versus Systemic Critiques**

There is a conflict in environmental movements between a focus on individual behaviour changes and systemic change. The environmentalism which does not sell well to Aysel's workshop audience (e.g. telling people not to fly on holidays) is a form of environmentalism which focusses on individual behaviour change. GreenFuture focusses on individual behaviour in much of their work, for example, in its workshops which target migrant communities. These are educational programmes which try to increase GreenFuture's presence among communities which are not their typical target group. Jasmin, the coordinator of these workshops, told me that the workshops in German language classes often cover issues such as waste prevention and separation, eating sustainably, sustainable fashion and energy saving. They focus on educating people about how to make more sustainable choices in their personal lives. Furthermore, I accompanied Aysel to one workshop in a school just outside Vienna. The focus that day was on food waste. Although Aysel did try to bring some of her more critical and systemic perspectives into the session, the material which was given to her by GreenFuture mainly focussed on what individuals can do to reduce their own food waste. Many children were receptive to the topics and seemed genuinely interested, but it struck me that many of the solutions provided by the workshop could be categorised as the type of environmentalism which Aysel had previously said does not appeal to this target group.

This framing of environmentalism also influences the tactics and strategies of the NGO. One evening, during a presentation from one of the organisation's experts on the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), the speaker mentioned GreenFuture's support for an end to meat subsidies. The speaker insisted that only by making meat more expensive would consumers cease to buy so much of it. She received some resistance from the activists in the audience who claimed that such change would also have to come culturally from below. However, the NGO's expert saw no alternative but to bring about this change by creating a change in individual consumer demand.

Despite the strong focus on individual behaviour change within GreenFuture, it is important to mention the co-existence of different framings within the organisation. I spoke to people of very many different persuasions, some of whom held more critical positions. For example, I attended the March 2022 Global Climate Strike with GreenFuture in Vienna. Some of the activists who joined the NGO's block at the march held signs which expressed anti-capitalist and anti-colonial views, among others. Some of these same activists also expressed such critical views to me in casual conversations throughout my participant observation. Even so, these same activists often took part uncritically in some of the organisation's activities and campaigns which were directed by strategies of individual behavioural change.

I also spoke to a small number of activists and employees who were consciously critical of the NGO, but who continued to work or engage with it. For example, Jonas told me that he finds that many of the activists with GreenFuture have a different perspective on climate and environmental issues to him, and that the NGO itself is not system critical enough for his liking. Nevertheless, he participates in order to get an introduction to the world of climate and environmental activism. Furthermore, Aysel told me about how she tries to bring in some critical

perspectives into her work with migrant schoolchildren and into the organisation generally. She finds that people are generally open to her, remarking:

> I think the people at [GreenFuture] are very critical and they understand that it's a different perspective and that's also very cool... I get a lot of understanding for what I'm trying to say and I think they all know too that the problem of environmental protection is not irrelevant for many people with a migration background, but that they are not in the socio-economic position at all. (Aysel, 28/04/22)

Both Jonas and Aysel expressed the opinion that a perspective which is more critical of the overall societal and economic system would be better at attracting those who face the inequalities of that same system. Aysel argued that including the perspectives of the more disadvantaged in society would help to reveal the structural and systemic issues at the root of environmental problems, because only speaking with the more privileged in society will not reveal problems of disadvantage and inequality. This was also echoed by many people with whom I spoke from other environmental organisations as well as by trade unionists. For example, Lukas from Fridays for Future Austria spoke of how the organisation is conscious of its own lack of diversity and is actively trying to address it. To do this they are engaging in a dialogue with different organisations, such as anti-racist groups, in order to incorporate a more intersectional perspective into their activism. I attended one meeting of a working group on structural change organised by GreenJustice with members of different trade union groups. The group discusses their stances on various government policies and plans, focusing on how broader structures can be changed to achieve greater equality and sustainability. These debates explicitly mentioned issues of gender, social class and race, and they framed environmental protection as relevant and beneficial to the lives of people, and not as sacrifice. Furthermore, when asked about the meaning they ascribe to their activism, young activists from Fridays for Future and the Lobau Bleibt movement framed

their answers in terms of justice. Many told me that they identified with the term "Klimagerechtigkeit" (climate justice) as opposed to "Umweltschutz" (environmentalism), highlighting the unequal effects of climate change between the Global North and South. Therefore, the broader environmental scene in Austria is by no means homogenous, and there are signs of changes in environmental philosophies as new actors enter the scene and engage with environmental issues.

**Conclusion: Postmaterialism, the Metabolic Rift and Contradictions**

Environmental activists see humanity as part of and dependent on nature. In fact, they see these as related, because humans' dependence on nature is derived from the fact that they are part of it. Many activists with whom I spoke both within GreenFuture and in other movements spoke of how this relationship and dependency has become obscured for many people through processes of industrialisation and urbanisation. In their own way, they are theorising the metabolic rift. Furthermore, environmentalists often expressed their own version of postmaterialist theory: in the eyes of many, it is not the case that the less well-off are not interested in environmentalism because it has no material value to them, but rather because they cannot *see* this value.

However, this theory is contradicted by how GreenFuture tends to frame solutions to environmental problems. Synonymous with many people's understandings of environmentalism is a framing in which environmental protection is achieved through individual behaviour change and placed at odds with material wellbeing. Therefore, I argue that GreenFuture fits into the category of reform environmentalism, as it seeks to resolve environmental problems without any fundamental change in dominant social paradigms and is part of Friends of the Earth, which Brulle (2000) identified as a reform environmentalist movement. Some activists within the NGO were

critical of this framing and the negative consequences it has for diversity. They argued that such a framing of environmentalism does not attract those who face the worst consequences of societal and structural inequalities, and that including people from disadvantaged backgrounds would expose the organisation to perspectives which reveal the systemic roots of environmental problems. My fieldwork and interviews also showed the heterogeneity and co-existence of different perspectives, with some critical voices trying to change GreenFuture from within and others uncritically participating in the NGO's work. It also showed that different perspectives exist within the broader scene of environmental activism in Austria, However, despite the co-existence of different perspectives and framings, a culture can emerge within an organisation which allows certain ideas to dominate. These ideas become part of the organisation's culture, directing its action and strategies. The next chapter explores in more detail how a culture of inclusion and exclusion can develop within Austrian environmentalisms, how an environmental philosophy becomes embedded in them, and the consequences this has for diversity.

## The "Bubble" of Environmental Activism: Feeling Comfortable versus Making a Difference

Meetings of GreenFuture's activist groups take place in a very tranquil environment. Each evening, I remove my jacket and shoes at the door and enter a large room where a tapestry hangs on the wall. Meditation music plays softly as activists gather and sit in a circle on cushions and on the floor. At the start of each session, the coordinator leads a "check-in" with the group. We take it in turns saying how we are feeling before starting the session, and this is repeated at the end. I soon noticed that I usually leave the meetings feeling much calmer and more grounded than when I arrived. This is a common experience, mentioned by other activists in their check-ins. These meetings are designed so that activists become immediately immersed in this calm atmosphere, leaving other worries and thoughts at the door. It therefore became apparent to me that these were not simply meetings of separate individuals, but rather of a group with a specific culture that is fostered by the coordinators. This is a culture in which many people feel comfortable. However, environmental movements can also foster cultures which lead to the exclusion of BIPOC and working-class people (e.g. Bell, 2020; Bell and Bevan, 2021). The social composition of a movement shapes its *ecological* habitus, which in turn informs its practice (Haluza-DeLay, 2008; Kasper, 2009; Kirby, 2018). In this chapter, I illustrate how environmental philosophies, along with the more mundane, everyday elements of a movement's culture, are embedded in its *ecological* habitus. I argue that, as the habitus is shaped by one's class position (Bourdieu, 1977), a class habitus is created in the movement, thus generating through its practice a culture of inclusion for some, while simultaneously excluding others.

**"Wohlfühlen": A Sense of Well-Being and Comfort**

The atmosphere of GreenFuture's activist meetings is one which made me and many other activists feel comfortable. Many activists mentioned the importance of "Wohlfühlen" to them. "Wohlfühlen" is a German word which can be roughly translated as feeling comfortable or having a sense of well-being. Stefan, one young student activist, told me:

> It's definitely an atmosphere in which I feel comfortable. So I definitely feel welcome there. Even though I wasn't much into activism before that, maybe I was scared that I would feel left out because I didn't have much to show for myself, but actually I feel comfortable there. It's a very accepting community. (Stefan, 18/04/22)

Linda remarked:

> I think it's a really good atmosphere with each other when we get involved. So it's a pleasant working atmosphere. You get along well with everyone and it is fulfilling for me that I know I am making a contribution and that I pay even more attention to resources in my everyday life. (Linda, 18/04/22)

Activists often talk about how their activism feels for them personally. Discussions of projects or events often focus on how they were experienced, rather than whether they achieved their objectives. At the end of my first meeting we sat around to discuss our thoughts about the webinar on genetic engineering that we had just attended. I expected a discussion of the topic to ensue, but instead most activists commented on the organisation and structure of the webinar. One remarked that it was too long without any breaks in between. Another thought there had been too much repetition. Very few attendees mentioned the actual topics discussed in the webinar. A few weeks later following the Global Climate Strike which had taken place in Vienna, feedback focused on the good weather and what a perfect atmosphere it had been for a protest. Activists discussed the music that was played, and a debate followed about whether more climate-focused music should be played at future strikes. Again, there was almost no discussion about what the strike achieved, who it reached and what its message was. Activists at GreenFuture focus a lot on

the atmosphere that is created by the events they organise. In this sense, environmental activism resembles a hobby for many. It is part of their cultural capital: the norms and dispositions they embody without questioning them. Felix, a trade unionist who takes part in GreenJustice's working group on structural change, was critical of this. Although he accepts the necessity of a sense of "Wohlfühlen" in order to do good work, Felix is critical of activism in which the goal of creating a comfortable atmosphere replaces the original mission:

> I think that feeling good is a basic requirement for doing good work there. That's not bad per se. It becomes difficult when it mutates into an end in itself. When there is no longer a goal. (Felix, 28/04/22)

Felix describes this kind of activism as a "preoccupation with oneself", and argues that it then becomes a form of amusement and is no longer altruistic or progressive. He argues that such inward-looking activism is not capable of gaining support from the majority of the population. GreenFuture, however, is not devoid of goals; on the contrary, the organisation runs many campaigns with clear aims and targets, often aiming to influence government policy. However, for the activist groups in which I participated, "Wohlfühlen" often becomes an end in itself and activism usually remains within a field of familiarity and comfort.

Environmental activists are often aware that they are operating within a "bubble" of only a relatively small segment of society. I heard the term "bubble" used repeatedly during my fieldwork with GreenFuture and in individual interviews. However, employees and activists were almost always at a loss as to how to broaden their reach. During one session, we broke into groups to brainstorm awareness-raising ideas for an anti-nuclear energy campaign, with a special focus on reaching people outside the "bubble". Many proposals focused on universities. Activists considered distributing flyers at various campuses or at student events. Vegan cafés were also

suggested as a suitable location for garnering support. Many activists mentioned that they were conscious that these ideas only targeted people within their "bubble", but that staying within it was simply the most efficient use of their limited time and resources.

For these activists, it is simply easier to organise within the cultural realms that they already know and feel comfortable in. Their habitus, as a set of internalised dispositions (Bourdieu, 1977), guides their practice and influences how they think about outreach strategies. However, this can lead to a reproduction of the same social structure within the movement and to the further alienation of groups who have been traditionally marginalised from mainstream environmentalism. Movements which have typically been as predominantly white and middle-class as many branches of environmentalism have been need to challenge themselves and leave their comfort zones in order to expand the diversity of their reach. There are signs that the typical barriers to environmental engagement are now being transcended in Austria, both from the outside in and from the inside out. For example, Felix told me that he would probably have a greater sense of "Wohlfühlen" if he joined a traditional Trade Union, but instead he embraces the challenge of bringing together the traditionally antagonistic labour and environmental movements. For him, comfort is not important, but rather the importance of the goal to be achieved. Natascha, the federal spokesperson for GreenJustice, also told me about the various difficulties involved in pushing an environmental agenda within the Austrian Sozialpartnerschaft system, but that they do it because they see this work as necessary. Furthermore, Fridays for Future Austria activists with whom I spoke told me about the various ways that they are trying to change the internal culture of their organisation, the discourses they use, the structures of their events and activities and how they reach out to other communities, in order to diversify participation in their movement. Although

activists admit this work is challenging, there are signs that efforts are underway in the broader scene of environmental activism in Austria which aim to dismantle cultures of exclusion.

**Environmental Philosophy in the Ecological Habitus of Environmental Activists**

A sense of "Wohlfühlen" is also connected to sharing the environmental philosophy of other activists. At one of my first meetings, we collectively came up with the basic principles of the group that we would have to abide by for the rest of our time there. One member mentioned the importance to her of coming together with like-minded people to work on projects of common interest. This was also mentioned in many interviews. For example, Selina told me:

> We are all just interested in the same thing in that environment […] we all just have the same goals in mind when we are together that evening and everyone is actually thinking about the same thing, wants to know the same thing and wants to educate themselves in exactly that area (Selina, 27/04/22)

Practical action is produced through the habitus (Haluza-DeLay, 2008, p. 205) and ways of living or acting sustainably or ecologically are products of habituated dispositions (Haluza-DeLay, 2008, p. 212). Furthermore, certain environmental philosophies are embedded in the ecological habitus of a movement (Kirby, 2018) and those environmental philosophies also influence the movement's repertoire of action (Carmin and Balser, 2002). As the habitus is formed through the embodiment of external wealth as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 18), different classes acquire and inherit different dispositions and norms. Class, therefore, can be understood as a cultural category, as much as an economic one, and differences in ecological habitus emerge between those of different social class. Therefore, GreenFuture's environmental philosophy can be understood as a product of its social composition, and it forms part of the ecological habitus of the movement.

One evening, one of the project groups that I participated in met with one of GreenFuture's interns to discuss our progress. After the meeting, the conversation turned to the issue of infiltrating the "bubble" of climate activism. The intern mentioned that this is difficult because, when people get involved with environmental movements, they are confronted with themselves and forced to reflect critically on their own lifestyle. He remarked on the need to find a balance; although nobody wants to seem judgemental or to exclude people, there should still be certain expectations of activists. Therefore, personal behaviour changes and "ecological" behaviour form part of the *habitus* of GreenFuture's activists, as do the environmental philosophies which underpin these changes. Activists feel comfortable when surrounded by others who embody similar environmental philosophies as part of their ecological habitus. However, this has consequences for diversity. As Aysel points out, environmentalism as sacrifice does not appeal to the target group she works with. It is, of course, more comfortable for activists to stick to the philosophies and tactics which are already part of their habitus and cultural capital, but this leads to the reproduction of the same social composition of environmental movements. It takes conscious efforts to step out of this comfort zone to break down the cultural barriers to participation.

**The "Mundane" Elements of a Culture**

The less "overtly political" elements of a group's culture (Johnson, 1987, p. 206) also play a role in shaping and reproducing its composition. This is because barriers to environmentalism for marginalised groups do not only include philosophies and tactics, but also the wider culture of a movement (Bell, 2020, p. 12). Issues with the culture of environmental movements can be barriers to participation of BIPOC and working-class people, with many feeling that the backgrounds and habits of activists are very different from their own (Bell and Bevan, 2021, p.

1211). The culture of GreenFuture is heavily shaped by the habitus of its members. For example, the activist programmes in which I took part were both organised into semesters, a term I had previously never heard outside of educational contexts. Almost every participant I spoke to was either currently in university education or was a graduate of a third level institution. The high educational capital of the participants can be felt in the NGO, as references to university and studying are often made during meetings and in casual conversations between activists. Furthermore, the atmosphere at meetings is often reminiscent of a school classroom, involving workshops, group brainstorming exercises, a set plan of how the evening will go, and a coordinator whose role resembles that of a teacher.

Casual conversations between activists in the corridor or in the local bar were filled with discussions of university courses, holiday destinations reached by train, and where to source organic, fair trade oranges. One evening's session kicked off with a team-building exercise; in pairs, we had to hold one piece of raw spaghetti between our index finger and that of our partner, being careful not to let it drop or snap. After the exercise, the programme coordinator was eager to assure us that the rest of the unused spaghetti would be eaten and not thrown away, as our mostly broken pieces had been. It was important to her that we know that she does not to contribute to food waste.

The elements of a culture which often seem small or insignificant can give important insights into a group's habitus, and the cultural capital of its members. These elements create an environment which is comfortable for those with a certain cultural capital and ecological habitus. However, this can also have negative consequences for diversity. People can be turned off participating in a movement if they do not relate to other members or perceive themselves to fit in (e.g. Bell and Bevan, 2021), thus leading to the reproduction of the social composition of the

movement. On the other hand, when people from marginalised groups see others like them getting involved in environmentalism, it can have the opposite effect. Aysel mentioned the importance of this in the school workshops that she conducts:

> I'm sure it makes a difference for them that I'm not from Austria. Every time in every class I've been in, people come up to me afterwards and say, “Where are you from actually? And what language do you speak?" And when I tell them about it, they're always happy for some reason. […] It's just cool, because I've often had the experience that, for example, people said "ah, I wish you could come by more often" or something like that. (Aysel, 28/04/22)

On one occasion I accompanied Aysel to a workshop. Just as she had said, one of the first things that happened in the class was that a student asked her where she was from. The realisation that Aysel also came from a migrant community created an immediate connection. Aysel stressed to me the importance of speaking to the students as equals, exactly as she would with me or with anybody else, avoiding using any unnecessarily formal or “educated” language. Felix also mentioned the importance of this within workshops on environmental issues in trade unions. He spoke about how they are often moderated in a way that is inclusive, but that some participants with a higher educational background often act in a very elitist and arrogant way. To combat this problem, he argues that everyone needs to start with themselves, be more sensitive towards people with less educational capital and to bring people along with them, rather than marginalise them.

These experiences echo Bell’s (2020) point about the dismissive attitudes of middle-class and more privileged activists often faced by working-class people when they try to take part in environmental movements. This is not to say that I directly observed such dismissiveness or arrogance during my time spent with GreenFuture. On the contrary, I found the activists I spent time with to be very respectful. Neither am I from a BIPOC or working-class background and so cannot discuss what the direct experience of people from marginalised communities would be in

this organisation. However, I did hear similar stories from the perspectives of environmental activists. For example, Lara, an activist I met at the Lobau protest camp, told me about how, at one of the camps that had been recently cleared by police, they had more participation from a people of working-class and poorer backgrounds. However, this led to conflicts with the more established, middle-class activists. Lara described how the newer participants made things difficult and did not understand the movement's ways of organising and behaving, and so they soon left the movement. Lara did not place the blame on the internal culture of the Lobau movement, but rather talked about how, if they had never studied, they may not have come into contact with such ways of organising. However, a movement's culture plays an important role in making people feel welcome and comfortable, thus influencing who participates and who does not. Leaving this culture unquestioned, and expecting other people to take it upon themselves to adapt to it, has the potential to cause further alienation and divisions.

**Conclusion: Diversification through a Rethinking of the Ecological Habitus**

The ecological habitus of an environmental movement includes both the more clearly political elements of its culture (its environmental philosophy) and the less obviously political, more subtle elements (the language used, topics of conversations, etc.). GreenFuture has embodied an environmental philosophy which places environmental protection at odds with material and economic wellbeing. This philosophy and ecological habitus shapes their practice, leading them to often expect other activists to adopt a certain lifestyle. The habitus of GreenFuture's activists also influences the more mundane, everyday elements of the organisation's culture. The shaping of the group's culture determines who feels comfortable there, who has a sense of "Wohlfühlen". This creates a culture of inclusion for many, but potentially also a culture of exclusion for others.

Additionally, the shaping of the group's culture can become an end in itself, so that environmentalism becomes more of a hobby than political work. In this case, a "bubble" emerges, in which activists struggle to think outside their own habitus. GreenFuture's activism, therefore, remains within the comfort zone of this "bubble", thus hindering outreach and diversification attempts. However, there are promising examples from the broader scene of environmental activism in Austria of how these barriers can be dismantled. This requires activists to actively put themselves in positions which may not necessarily be the most comfortable or familiar, but which open up possibilities for broader participation in their movements.

## Conclusion

The overrepresentation of white, middle-class activists in Global North environmental movements is concerning, given that the sheer scale and pace of action needed to avoid ecological catastrophe will require broad public support and engagement. It is also troubling considering that the impacts of environmental problems fall disproportionately on the most marginalised in society. I approached this research asking why such unequal participation emerges. I was dissatisfied with the theory of postmaterialism, which homogenises the various ways of caring for the environment, and fails to take account of the broader structural forces of capitalism and colonialism which have shaped the dominant understandings of nature and environment within many environmental movements. Therefore, I took another approach. Instead of focusing on why BIPOC and working-class people choose not to get involved in environmental movements, as is often done, I decided to explore the issue of inclusion and diversity from within an established, mainstream environmental NGO, to understand the dynamics which lead to the marginalisation of certain groups.

Class tensions have been embedded in Austrian environmental movements from their beginnings. Early conservationist movements often had conservative tendencies and were mainly the concern of the more privileged in society. Although there was also a form of left-wing environmentalism tied to the workers' movement, most early conservationist movements rejected this form of environmentalism, and embodied nationalist, or even national socialist perspectives. The environmental conflicts of Zwentendorf and Hainburg, which acted as catalysts for the emergence of Austria's modern environmental movements, deepened class divisions, as workers and Trade Unions often supported the contested projects for the sake of job creation, while

environmentalists opposed them on ecological grounds. Thus, in the early stages of the development of Austria's modern environmental movements, the idea that the protection of the environment was at odds with people's basic material needs, and thus disadvantageous for the least well-off in society, became an important part of the discourse.

In this thesis, I argue that this framing, and thus the barriers to participation for BIPOC and working-class people, are reproduced by environmental movements through their ecological habitus. The ecological habitus is the set of norms, habits and dispositions which is embodied by environmental activists and shapes their activism. This habitus is formed both by the environmental philosophies of activists and movements, and by the more mundane, seemingly less-political elements of a movement's culture. In the environmental philosophy of the activists I spoke with, humans are part of and dependent on nature. However, they often consider forces of capitalism and colonialism (although not explicitly mentioned) as having blurred this relationship for most people. Therefore, they express a more nuanced version of the postmaterial theory: one which does not see class as related to support for environmental protection, but rather with the ability to see the true relationship between humanity and nature. This then shapes the practice of GreenFuture, as they actively target the better-off in society for support, and their focus on an environmentalism of individual lifestyle change reproduces the framing that environmentalism is something that needs to be afforded by the better-off.

Furthermore, a "bubble" of environmental activism emerges when activists concentrate their efforts on what is comfortable for them. This occurs when activists surround themselves with people who hold the same environmental philosophies as them, but also when the more seemingly mundane, everyday elements of the group's culture remain unquestioned. For example, GreenFuture activists fail to burst their "bubble" when they only petition university students and customers at vegan cafés. The ecological habitus of GreenFuture incorporates both a certain

environmental philosophy, and other dispositions, habits and norms, which shape the NGO's culture and direct its practice, thus creating a culture of inclusion for some, while simultaneously (and mostly unintentionally) maintaining the exclusion of others.

Bell and Bevan (2021) argue that, in order to improve the diversity of participation in environmental movements, there is a need to move beyond efforts to include BIPOC and working-class people into middle-class environmentalism, and instead to focus on the transformation of these movements. This means that, instead of trying to be inclusive of people within their version of environmentalism, environmental movements need to rethink the type of environmentalism that they are advocating for, and whether this appeals to those who have traditionally been marginalised. I agree with this position, but I elaborate on it by arguing that the type of environmentalism that a movement advocates (its environmental philosophy) and the more mundane factors which contribute to the inclusion or exclusion of certain people (where and when a group meets, the type of atmosphere created at events etc.) all shape the culture of the movement. This culture shapes and is shaped by the ecological habitus of the movement and its activists, which in turn informs the movement's practice and the outcomes of its activism.

This position, instead of placing the onus on the marginalised to engage more, places the responsibility on environmental movements to reflect critically on how their own cultures can contribute to the exclusion of BIPOC and working-class people. Within GreenFuture, although there are some critical voices, activists rarely manage to engage in the sort of self-reflection necessary to emerge from their "bubble". There are, however, some signs that this is changing in the broader scene of environmental activism in Austria, as new actors enter the scene and new alliances are formed. Transforming environmental movements into more diverse and representative entities requires critical self-reflection, and this can be challenging and uncomfortable work. However, this thesis has shown that the prioritisation of comfort as a goal facilitates the

reproduction of a movement's social structure. Therefore, although it may be uncomfortable at times, a self-reflective transformation of movements such as GreenFuture is necessary for the achievement of a more diverse, representative, and effective environmentalism.

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